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'No hungry generations tread thee down,'

grows out of the idea of treading sod down,—treading him, become a sod, down. He had been treading sod down. Perhaps the word 'sod' will appear the more fitting from a consideration of the dead-and-buried idea associated with the mortality of man, and the lack of such an association with the birds of the air.

Man dies and a mound of turf is the constant reminder of his mortality; birds die too, but what marks their resting-place? Do they die, or simply 'leave the world unseen,' for a season? Every returning spring brings them back with the same fashion of feathers and the same melody of song. Nothing but a process of reasoning assures us that they die, but, to our senses, the exact reproduction of types argues their immortality.

On the other hand, to our senses, man is mortal, and only to our reason, immortal. Keats, taking the poetic view of things and not the scientific (Stedman's *Victorian Poets*, p. 9), says to the nightingale.

'Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!'

His reason therefore is, that this self-same song was heard in olden-times by emperor and clown, that it found its way, perhaps, to Ruth's sad heart, as homesick 'she stood in tears amid the alien corn,' and

'The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.'

So much for the immortality of the nightingale.

He says in the last stanza:

'Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades.'

He is 'forlorn'; that word is like a bell to toll him back to himself and back to the world of sorrows.

How significant the word is, taken in connection with all that has been said and suggested about 'easeful Death!'

Forlorn? yes, for it is but 'a waking dream.'

It is a sad experience that, sometimes,

'the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.'

And here at the end we have the same tone of

feeling as in the beginning.

It was the nightingale's full-throated music that made his heart ache; 'fled is that music,' he is forlorn.

In conclusion, the poem is a circle; it is a whole whose parts are fitly joined together; *joined* together?—there are no seams, nothing artisan about it; out of the fire of the creative imagination it comes 'a thing of beauty'; it is an artistic whole showing the *unity, harmony, and completeness*, of interrelated parts, by virtue of which the reader experiences the pleasurable sense of the Beautiful.

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A STUDY IN THE CLASSIC FRENCH DRAMA: CORNEILLE.

THE Miracle Plays and Mysteries of the Middle Ages delighted Europe for more than two centuries, but in Italy, Spain, and England, they were discarded earlier than in France for works of greater merit and somewhat more regular in their composition. The Italians began to translate the ancients, especially Seneca, and a national drama arose in Spain with Lope de Vega, and in England with Shakespeare. In France the development of the drama was not as rapid, and it was only in 1548 that the Parliament of Paris forbade the representation of the Mysteries. The religious plays continued under different names, but the whole conception of the serious drama changed. The Mysteries had had for object the representation of events of great interest to the audience, at that time, and extending over many years. No attention was paid to the unities of time, of place, and of action, and there was no division into acts and scenes.

In the sixteenth century the works of the ancients began to be translated, and in 1552 Jodelle wrote his *Cléopâtre*, where are seen the principal traits which were to characterize later the Classic French tragedy. Garnier and Montchrestien followed in the sixteenth century, then Hardy and Mairet in the seventeenth, but in spite of great freedom left the dramatic writers, there was for a long time in France no Lope de Vega, no Shakespeare.

"Enfin Corneille vint," and the *Cid* appeared

in 1636. The author of that wonderful tragedy had already written several comedies, and *Médée*, a tragedy. He had even collaborated with Richelieu himself, whom he had displeased by not following slavishly the plans of tragedies prepared by the great minister. Nothing, however, could have led any one to foresee that Corneille was able to produce the *Cid*, and when that tragedy was played it excited boundless enthusiasm by the chivalric spirit of the heroes and the beauty of the verse. France could then mention her poet and be proud of her Corneille as England was of her Shakespeare. There is no doubt that the English dramatist is superior to the French. Shakespeare is universal and studies all the classes of society and all the passions and feelings of men. His works are, at the same time, interesting for the plot, which is often complicated, and for the delineation of character, and his depth of thought is as wonderful as his knowledge of the human heart. Corneille's works are not as varied nor as profound as those of Shakespeare, and although a writer of comedies as well as of tragedies, there is not in any one work of his both the comic and the tragic, which often produce such a pleasing effect in Shakespeare. The difference in the plays of the two poets lies not only in the difference of their genius but principally in the French conception of comedy and tragedy.

In the Miracle Plays and Mysteries of the Middle Ages we see the blending together of the comic and the serious, of the religious and the profane, and Hugo's Romantic school invented nothing when they advocated the mixture of comedy and tragedy in the same play. In the Classic French drama, however, which begins with the Renaissance in the sixteenth century, the line was strictly drawn between comedy and tragedy. In the former there was to be nothing essentially tragic, although Molière often went in his masterpieces to the very verge of the serious. In tragedy there was to be nothing comic. Again, the Classic French drama was a psychological study, and no complicated plot was required for the development of a passion, of a feeling. Provided that passion, that feeling was deep, it was sufficient to be a subject for a tragedy. There

was no necessity that the play should end with the death of nearly all the personages on the stage, as in most of Shakespeare's tragedies. The play often ended by a marriage, but that fortunate result must have been brought about by events which called for an emotion sufficiently deep for the study of character.

I wish to call attention once more to that chief purpose of the Classic French drama and to repeat again that it is nothing but a psychological study. A number of critics have not understood this essential characteristic and, therefore, have not understood French tragedy. How easy it has seemed to Schlegel and others to ridicule the rules of the unities, that of place, which required the action to happen in the same hall of the same palace; that of time, which allowed to the event only twenty-four hours; that of action, which required one main plot and the concentration of the interest on the same personages. The unity of action alone was pardoned by the critics referred to, and they comment at great length on the unreality, on the artificiality of the rules of the unities. Of course it would be absurd to imagine the events in *Othello* and *Hamlet* restricted to one place and to one day, for Shakespeare intended, by a complicated plot, to describe not only one passion, but in the same play to make us see in different persons, different passions. In *Othello* we have the devoted love of Desdemona, the hatred and hypocrisy of Iago, and the fierce jealousy of Othello, whilst in *Hamlet* nearly all the problems which agitate the human soul are studied in a masterly manner.

According to the French conception of tragedy, the event leading to the catastrophe could take place in one palace and in twenty-four hours, because, being given men and women with a profound passion, the development of that passion did not call for many events in different places or for a long duration of time. By the representation of a tragedy necessitating two or three hours, the French dramatists imagined that they were coming nearer the appearance of truth in allowing only twenty-four hours to the action, than did the English and Spanish dramatists with their action extending often over several years. There can be no true representation of life on the stage; every-

thing is more or less conventional, and whatever in the Classic French drama was lost in the interest of the plot, was gained in conciseness and force. The necessity of concentrating the event into a limited space of time and into one place called for the deepest thought and made the tragedies of Corneille and Racine wonderfully concise and strong. Let us not, therefore, regret that the Classic French tragedy obeyed the rules of the unities, for we probably owe to these rules the chief charm of the masterpieces of the seventeenth century. It is true that it required men of genius to produce great works, according to this conception of the drama, from the second half of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and I admit that these men were rare, but let us be satisfied with the *Cid* and *Polyeucte*, with *Andromaque*, *Britannicus*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie*, and even with *Zaire*, *Méropé*, and *Tancrède*.

As critics we study the plans and purposes of the great dramatists, but as men possessed with the sense of what is beautiful and noble, we care not whether Corneille and Racine even thought of the rules of the unities or intended to study love or hatred. We are simply entranced by the sublimity, by the sweetness, by the exquisite charm of their works. We are deeply interested in the love of Rodrigue and Chimène, we are roused to enthusiasm by the lofty patriotism of the old Horatius, by the admirable clemency of Augustus, and the immutable Christian faith of Polyeucte.

In reading Corneille we see that the poet's aim is grandeur, and his heroes are said to have been greater than ordinary mortals. It is a shame for humanity if there are not to be found men and women animated by the noble feelings of Corneille's heroes and heroines. In the struggle between love and duty, which of the two should triumph? Let every man answer that question for himself, but let him read Corneille and take lessons in self-sacrifice, in everything inspiring. There are to be found in that poet's works the grandest maxims of morality and of patriotism expressed with a lofty eloquence. Corneille's chief qualities are sublimity in the thought and eloquence in the expression. His defects are those of his age,

some bombastic and affected discourses, but his qualities are those that we may expect from a noble and pure soul. His life was simple and uneventful, and we must look for his grand genius in only a few of his works—in his greatest, the *Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*, and to some extent also in *Rodogune*, *Nicomède*, *Pompée*, *Héraclius*, and *Don Sanche*. In his other tragedies his thought is often sublime, but the expression no longer corresponds with it, and in the midst of beautiful ideas and often beautiful verses we meet with passages which are somewhat ludicrous in their pomposity.

To fully appreciate Corneille we must remember that, long before Molière produced his great works, Corneille wrote the *Menteur*, an excellent comedy. To compare him with Shakespeare we must, therefore, study his comedies as well as his tragedies, and we shall admire in the *Menteur* most delicate wit and charming situations. In the *Cid* the rules of the unities are not strictly observed, but how much stronger and more pathetic is Corneille's work than that of Guillem de Castro! The *Cid* is endowed with perpetual youth, and a thrill of emotion passes through our being on reading that ever charming "duet of love" between Chimène and Rodrigue. *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte* are grand and sublime, and in studying literature, even after having read Shakespeare, Schiller, and Goethe, we shall ever exclaim with Mme de Sévigné: *Vive notre vieux Corneille!*

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THE ETYMOLOGY OF *Overwhelm*.

THE word *whelm* or *overwhelm* has not been traced farther back than Middle English. Skeat¹ says:

"The word presents some difficulty; but it is obvious that *whelm* and *overwhelm* must be closely related to M.E. *whelven* and *overwhelven*, which are used in almost precisely the same sense."

He then assumes a substantive *whelm* as the base of the verb. He does not say what meaning he supposes this to have had, but

¹ The Century dictionary, besides copying Skeat's etymology, modestly suggests that *whelm* may be *whelve* influenced by *welm* 'to bubble.'